

# Listen

## *A Seeker's Resource for Spiritual Direction*

J A N U A R Y 2 0 1 3

V O L 7 : I S S U E 1

### BECOME AVAILABLE

Our lives can be measured and weighed with a multitude of scales. In the end, two defining elements are often present: grit and grace. I've come to this conclusion after a million days of living, listening, observing, and paying attention to heroes and wisdom figures, young children, the elderly, and people of all genders and ages who are joyful, and who suffer horrors that inflict wounding that is both visible and invisible. Additionally, after decades of looking into a mirror at my own self together with delving deep into my interior motives and heart thumps, I'm convinced that life is a dance of grit and grace. Meeting regularly with my spiritual director helps my gaze turn from judgment and condemnation to embodied, collaborative love and delight.

Grit is forged deep in the belly of a person, is stronger than resilience, and is located in the very cellular structure of our anatomy. Grit is a pearl; translucent, luminous. Imagine the woman whose skin is etched with lines, and whose eyes glow with bright, welcoming, healing power. Or the man, whose gruff, worn hands are tender, gentle. Or the child—or person of any age—who is ridiculed, bullied, and chooses not to respond with the same acts that cause harm.

A characteristic of grit is to choose life, even if depression, grief, or debilitating illness is occurring. Grit



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher — *Tyrannus forficatus*

is not the same as pulling oneself up by one's own bootstraps, as an adage advises. (Sometimes we don't have any bootstraps to tug on.) Grit with grace is an interior rotation toward living, continued breath, vision, and purpose. Grit with grace moves beyond self-centered survival, into a dance of life affirming life.

To live with grit is a simple concept, full of unspoken implications. Not a trouble-free proposition, living with grace and grit implies both surrender and fortitude. A deeply spiritual act, living with authentic grit transforms our families, workplace, unjust situations, and the world. Our world is hungry and needs your grit and grace.

Pause to ponder how you define grit, and the ways that you personally experienced grit during your life timeline. Then, turn on your radar to look for innovative examples of grit that demonstrate courage, perseverance, determination, and choosing life in spite of trials and suffering. In addition, seek examples of

joy, compassion, art and empathy rising from the quality of grit. The individuals and organizations that best demonstrate grit have insider knowledge and insight born from the personal experience of transformation. What might your observations teach you?

Ponder and examine how grace is operating in your life—grace being tender, undeserved love that arrives from a slightly mysterious source that may be wholly other, have two legs, four legs, be rooted in the earth, bear wings, or even beat with a heartbeat known as you.

A spiritual guide is a trusted companion who accompanies us in the ash, embers, and fire when grit rises to find voice and action. A spiritual companion celebrates when we experience the joy and triumph of perseverance wrapped in the grace of surrender and a baring of oneself to ultimate reality and mystery, life.

—Pegge Erkeneff

#### SEEDS OF INTEREST:

● Field Guide: *Know Thyself and You Shall Know Thy Lord*

● Poem: *The Shedding*

● Global Resources

● Poem: *The Face of Spiritual Direction*

● Ask Owl

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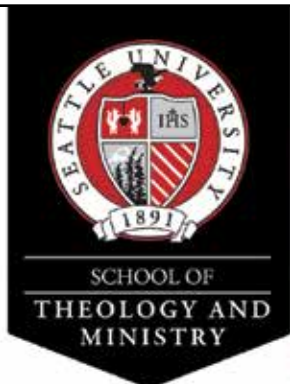
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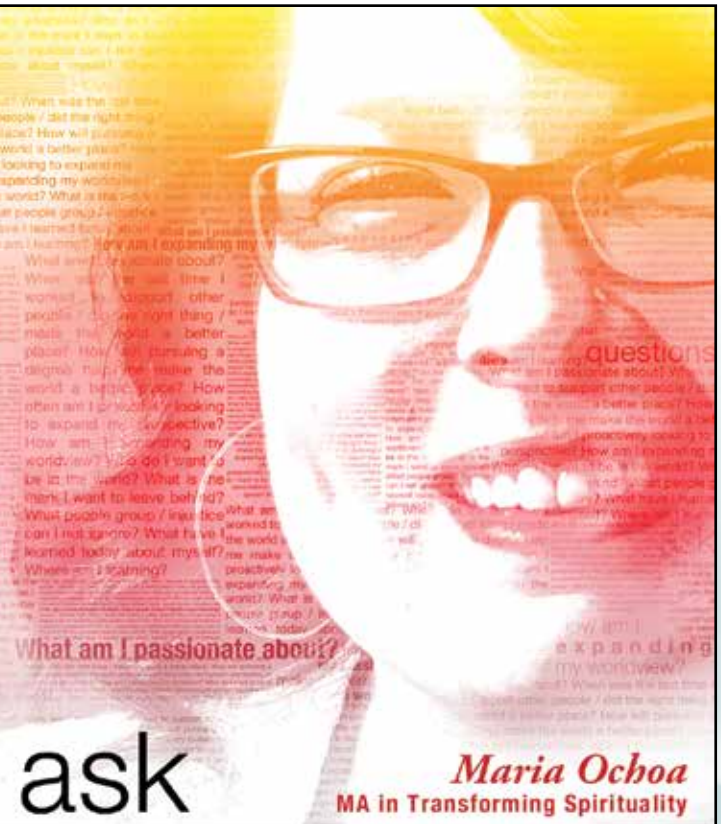
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The *Into the Heart of Christ* Retreat Team, Lee Eskey, Neelama Eyres, Britta Eskey and David Koch, brings decades of experience working with people in spiritual and transformational organizations across the U.S., Canada and Europe.



**My story**  
is in the  
**questions I ask**



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# FIELD GUIDE

## “KNOW THYSELF AND YOU SHALL KNOW THY LORD” (HADITH)

**O**ur friend the Mulla travels to China and enters a bank for a financial transaction. When the bank official asks him to verify his identity, the Mulla reaches into his pocket and pulls out a pocket mirror. Peering into the mirror for some time, the Mulla finally declares, “Yep! That’s me all right! I do certify it!”

Muslims will recognize the Mulla’s journey to China as a reference to an oft-quoted but unauthenticated *hadith*: “To seek knowledge, travel as far as China.” Both the Qur’an and related teachings urge us to go to great lengths to acquire knowledge. The story also points to the critical need for *self*-knowledge.

Getting to know ourselves is a sacred undertaking for, as the Prophet Muhammad declared, “Know thyself and you shall know thy Lord.” Without self-knowledge we shall never know the spark of Divinity within us.

Spiritual teachers urge us to move from the personality masks that we wear in this world to our real face. Our authentic face is most beautiful. The advice is simple, but the task is not easy. Sadly, we are conditioned to define ourselves and others by superficial realities. We focus on what we have and what we do rather than on being and expressing our most authentic, essential selves.

We identify ourselves and one another on the basis of education, profession, family, or financial status, and we miss out on the inner reality. This has sorry consequences for the choices we make and the way we experience our lives. If we have no connection to our divine essence, living only to satisfy the needs and desires of the ego-driven personality, we are indeed living what Henry David Thoreau famously called “lives of quiet desperation.”

In the too-few years between what seems to be a meaningless birth and what we fear is the non-being of death, we grasp at whatever pleasures and material benefits life has to offer, never fully satisfied and always looking for more. Such a life is but a dim shadow of what our Creator and Cherisher has in mind for us.

The sacred work of getting to know ourselves gradually diminishes the shadow and brings us closer to the Light. Little by little, with each level of higher awareness we remove the veils that separate us from the Light. We become aware of some astonishing truths about ourselves that are confirmed by verses in the Qur’an.

—Jamal Rahman lives in Seattle, Washington, USA, is the cofounder and Muslim Sufi minister at Seattle’s Interfaith Community Church, and adjunct faculty at Seattle University. He is the author of several books, including *Religion Gone Astray: What We Found at the Heart of Interfaith*, and *Spiritual Gems of Islam: Insights & Practices from the Qur’an, Hadith, Rumi & Muslim Teaching Stories to Enlighten the Heart & Mind* (2013). Contact him at [jamalrah@yahoo.com](mailto:jamalrah@yahoo.com).

Listen

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and discover excellent questions to ask yourself and any potential spiritual directors you choose to interview. To locate a spiritual director or guide, go online to *Seek and Find Guide: A Worldwide Resource of Available Spiritual Directors*. More than 5,000 spiritual directors are listed by geographical location at [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org).





## The Shedding

She walked  
out of the old stories  
Each one a garment  
worn and rework  
One by one  
she loosened the buttons  
and they fell away  
behind her on the trail of her footsteps  
She did not look back  
The chain of stories clung together  
Rattling from her silent throat  
Reeling out in  
Great loops that lay  
like the harmless shadows of snakes in the dust  
Where other travelers trod them unheard  
The old skin shed  
Layer by layer  
As her body moved forward  
step by step  
Into presence  
Until she was  
Naked under the sky  
Only her feet bare on the ground  
Only her new skin  
Smooth  
Feeling the wind and the drops of rain  
Only the word now  
on her tongue  
That she tasted and savored  
And did not speak

— Sarah Kotchian [New Mexico, USA]



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**February 26, 2013; May 23, 2013**

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**April 11–18, 2013**

**St. Paul, Minnesota, USA**

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[joyologist@gwi.net](mailto:joyologist@gwi.net); 207-491-7524  
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## The Face of Spiritual Direction

Look at her face, tell me what you see  
 A reflection of something in you and me  
 Perhaps a reminder of who you are  
 A spiritual journey that's come so far  
 She sees seeking a moment for prayer  
 He sees a picture of loss and despair  
 You see sadness where she sees grace  
 Or is it an ending and an empty space  
 One thing is constant, the desperate need  
 To find some hope amongst the weeds  
 A straw to grasp to ease her fear  
 A tiny sign that says she's here  
 See it on her face, hidden in her words  
 A voice that speaks but is never heard  
 Listen carefully beyond what's said  
 You'll hear the pain, the fear, the dread  
 Her inner self she can never please  
 Rejection and failure are all she sees  
 Her faith is shaken, she feels discarded  
 Hurlled adrift in waters uncharted  
 She makes the decisions on how she lives  
 No advice, no judgment do you give  
 A loving presence, calm and steady  
 You'll be listening when she is ready  
 — Connie Lagerlöf [Alberta, Canada]



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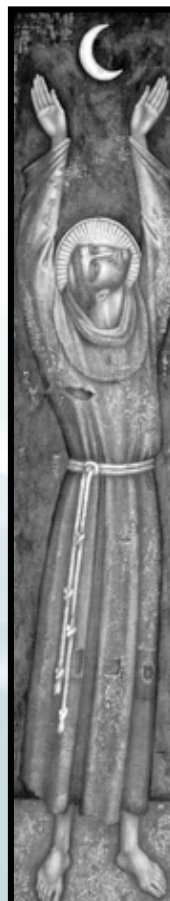
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# ASK OWL

**Q**uestion: I have drifted pretty far from the church of my upbringing. Am I still welcome in spiritual direction?



**H**oot Hoot: Of course! Our life journey is not predictable, and varies, turns, ebbs, and flows. At times we are very connected to a faith community that may be familiar to us. At other

times, an unfolding invitation may appear and lead into uncharted exploration. At times like these a spiritual companion can be most beneficial. The truth is that a spiritual director is present to your unfolding story... wherever, however, and whenever that is experienced, in the specificity of here, now, and in the details of your life.

You might discover that you desire to explore the church of your upbringing, where you are now, what transpired during the in-between years, and where your longings and lived experience are leading. A spiritual director is a wonderful companion in this inner exploration of an outer journey that is embodied in time and locale. Thank you for your question. 🦉

—If you have a question for Owl, please e-mail [Listen@sdiworld.org](mailto:Listen@sdiworld.org).

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### Directed Retreats

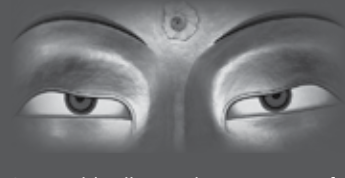
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—Translated by Marta Rios and Xavier Ortiz Monasterio



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